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## Outcasts and Outlaws



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### Chapter 1 by aburton

"What's our status?" the speakers hissed with static as Breydon shouted over the comms.

Wil wiped the sweat off his brow with a dirty sleeve and grunted with frustration. "FTL drive is still down! Trying to bypass primary system!" Will plunged his arm into the open conduit panel, feeling around for the circuit cords.

"They're gaining on us!" Breydon warned.

"I'm working as fast as I can!" Wil shouted back, letting the anger slip through. "Got it." He said to himself as he felt the bundle of cords. Feeling his way to the connection port, he gripped the plugs and yanked.

The ship lurched violently and Wil lost his balance. Momentum flung his body away from the conduit panel, while his arm remained lodged in the metal framework of the panel. Wil felt an excruciating pop and pain exploded in his shoulder. He cried out and his eyes instantly teared up. He managed to extricate his arm out of the panel.

Will: Are you ok? Breydon asked.

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"NO!" He yelled back as he looked at the ship's side. He reached in with his good hand and pulled the... ng the cords across the room. He banged his good hand against the... and frustration and pain. The ship rocked again.

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“What happened?” He could hear his brother wrestling with the controls as he tried to out maneuver their pursuers. He was a good pilot, one of the best he knew, but he couldn’t outrun them for ever. He had to get the drive back online or they were dead men.

“The circuit cords are fried! Those were our last ones!” He cried out in pain at another explosion of pain. “I need more time!”

“Our rear shields are almost depleted! How much time do you need?”

Wil struggled to think through the pain and fear that threatened to immobilize him. The primary conduit was blown, the last conduit cords were fried, and he had no way to link the secondary conduits to the drive core. He yelled, loud and furious.

“I have to turn the ship around! Rear emitters are offline. I have to go head to head to give us more time! Can you fix it, Wil?”

He could hardly hear his brother’s voice over the pounding of enemy fire on the ship.

“There’s no way to hook up the secondary conduit to the drive core! I’m sorry, Brey. I don’t know if i can get us out of this.” He banged his head against the wall and held it there in defeat.

“Then hook it up directly to the power core! We can’t do this head to head thing for much longer.”

“What! The drive core would explode, it can’t handle that much power!”

“Then I’ll drop the output.” Breydon blurted.

It could work, but that would leave them without shields. They would have to time it perfectly.

“You know what that means, right?”

Breydon laughed. “I still got some tricks up my sleeve. Let me know when.”

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"We're only going to get one shot at this!" Wil warned his brother.

"I'm ready!" He shot back. Wil attached the power cord and bypassed the safety protocols on the drive core. "Now Brey!"

Wil watched as the power core dropped to half output and heard the shield emitters go offline. The ship took several direct hits without the shields to protect them. The ship felt if it was going to rip apart as he was flung to the floor from a blast.

"FTL online! Got," Breydon was cut off by an explosion that sounded like it came through the comm system.

Wil yelled for his brother through the intercom as he struggled back to his feet. His brother failed to answer him. Using the walls for support, Wil made his way back to the cockpit. He shouted through the intercom to his brother without response.

He stumbled into the cockpit a few minutes later and gasped in shock as he saw his brother on the floor, covered in burns and blood. His exposed flesh was peppered with bits of shrapnel. The reduced power was still too much for the systems to handle and had caused the nav controls to overload.

Falling beside his brother, Will shook him with his good arm. Tears of pain and loss blurred his vision. His throat clenched up and his breath caught in his throat. They had too many close calls over the years, their luck was bound to run out eventually. He hung his head in defeat and sadness.

Breydon choked and coughed. "We did it, brother. You did good."

Wil lifted his head and looked into his brother's eyes. "It wasn't good enough." He said quietly, mournfully.

"It's alright, we succeeded in our mission. You can warn the others." Breydon choked again, ragged and sudden. "I gotta go. Brother." He chuckled softly, blood bubbling on his lips. "I'll see you in the vast."

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